

# aspire

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### Voices from around the country

We hear from students and parents from around the country about the learning young people have missed out on during lockdown and the support that IntoUniversity has provided.

### IntoUniversity's approach to Learning Recovery

We discuss how IntoUniversity will support students to catch up their lost learning with the new Head of Learning Recovery.

### Staying Focused

Last month, we launched our Staying Focused fundraising campaign to ensure we can be there for our students at the time when they need us the most; find out more about its progress inside.

## LEARNING

# RECOVERY

## EDITION

**When students return to school in September, many will have gone without face-to-face teaching for six months, which experts fear will lead to a substantial step backwards for disadvantaged students.**

To understand the potential educational challenges of the year ahead, we spoke to two teachers at Primary schools that are partnered with IntoUniversity centres.

Amy Cooke, Year 5 teacher, Moston Fields Primary School, Manchester

### How do you think the period of home-schooling will affect your students when they return to school?

'I think there will be three things which have the biggest effect. The fact that they haven't been learning as much will mean that they will have some learning loss. Also, we already know that the summer holidays affect routine and structure, let alone six months off school. So I think it is going to be massively overwhelming coming back to school. Then finally, their attitude to learning will have been affected; coming back into the school to structured lessons will be a shock and a struggle for some students.

My main concern is getting the children back in school, back into the school routine and getting them engaged in learning. A colleague's daughter, a Year 7 student, was invited back to school for a transition day but now feels so comfortable at home when offered the option of having it over the phone, they chose that option.'

'We are very quickly in September, going to need to figure out who has engaged with the learning for the last five months and who hasn't, then put additional interventions and support in place.'

### With a full curriculum already, do you think schools are going to be able to support catch up work? If so, what will this support look like?

'It's hard. We can't possibly go back to March, because then there will be a generation of children who are always on catch up. We can't just dig out the plans from last year; it needs to be carefully planned, so that teachers know what key learning objectives have been missed, and therefore what needs to be taught more explicitly. We are very quickly in September, going to need to figure out who has engaged with the learning for the last five months and who hasn't, then put additional interventions and support in place.'

Jeremy Barnes, Head Teacher, All Saints Primary School, Liverpool

### What differences are you expecting to see between students?

'I think it is safe to say that the differences [between students] are going to be more marked and visible. There have been around 50-60% of students, who tend to be the ones who are better performing at school, who have engaged very well, and all the reports we are getting back from parents is that they are managing to continue their learning. But there is also a proportion, not just the families who have access to Free School Meals, who have found this very difficult; we have a very high proportion of students with Special Educational Needs. So you have children who have found it difficult to access the learning, and while we have done a lot from a welfare point of view, that gap will have widened. There is no question about that.'

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### What can organisations like IntoUniversity do to support students and schools in the next academic year?

'I am already trying to look at something more ambitious than just going back to normal in September. If we can get our children out and therefore free up space in school, [it will help with] the restrictions and allow for more community learning. [...] One thing that I have said since IntoUniversity came to Anfield is I don't just want you to be something that is set apart from the school, which only some of our students access. I want you to be part of wider community initiatives.'

## Voices from around the country

In the last edition of *aspire*, we discussed the immediate effects of lockdown on our students' ability to learn. A survey of our centres reported that many students lacked access to their own digital devices and a good space to study, and that parents weren't able to provide support with school work. As a result, **IntoUniversity** has been providing weekly online and telephone support.

Now, as lockdown eases, our focus is shifting to the long-term effects.

The attainment gap is set to widen – school closures are predicted to reverse the progress made in closing the attainment gap over the last ten years: the gap could increase by up to 75%, according to Education Endowment Foundation analysis. The anticipated learning losses for disadvantaged students as a result of school closures are estimated to be between four and six months (Elliot Major and Machin, 2020) and employability prospects for these students are also reducing.

'I just wanted to take this opportunity to tell you how grateful we are as a family, for your continued support during lockdown. It has been so useful knowing that if my son is struggling with something, he can get support from you on a weekly basis.'

Parent, **IntoUniversity** Manchester North

'As I'm in Year 11 and going into sixth form next year I realise that there may be things I'll need to catch up on, because I will have gaps in my GCSE knowledge because of missing things in lockdown. I feel quite worried about catching up.'

Year 11 student, **IntoUniversity** Oxford South East

'I have missed out on going to school, which has impacted my writing. During lockdown I found it hard to know where to start.'

Year 6 student, **IntoUniversity** Southampton West

'The biggest challenge of learning in lockdown has been having to complete all of my work online as there is nobody to talk to if I get stuck or can't answer a question. Luckily I can email my teachers, or ask **IntoUniversity**. I'm also nervous about going back to school as I'm worried I'll be behind and won't understand the work as I have missed so much time at school.'

Year 7 student, **IntoUniversity** Nottingham West

'It is wonderful to know you are there for us and are so supportive every single week. My daughter knows that you will call and anything she struggles with she puts on side and waits for your support.'

Parent, **IntoUniversity** Haringey North

'My son's confidence in English was so low and it meant he was really resistant to doing any of his work in the subject. I've been really struggling to get him to do any of the work at all at home. Then you called and I honestly can't explain the difference it made.'

Parent, **IntoUniversity** Kennington

'The biggest challenge is that you don't have contact with your teacher, you have to study yourself and find work to help you. I have bought myself some books to learn on my own but it is hard to know the right ones and motivate yourself. Also my laptop is a bit slow and it is hard to stay focused.'

Year 6 student, **IntoUniversity** Hammersmith

## IntoUniversity's approach to Learning Recovery

**This coming academic year will be crucial in the lives of young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, as they strive to recover from the severe impacts of the shutdown. IntoUniversity has an effective response to support students and schools to help bridge the gap of lost learning.**

**To coordinate this work across the charity, we have appointed a new Head of Learning Recovery for the 2020/21 academic year, Eilis O'Donnell.**



**Eilis O'Donnell**  
Head of Learning Recovery,  
**IntoUniversity**

**Can you give us a bit of background about your experience?**

'I trained as an English and Psychology teacher with Teach First in 2010 and was placed in an Academy in Walthamstow. I had spent some time working in marketing and charity fundraising but I wanted to be part of improving outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

I became the Assistant Learning Manager for the Sixth Form which meant I was a part of student decision-making and encouraging them to think about their futures. All of our students applied for university and there was no shortage of drive and aspiration, however some students would have benefitted from earlier guidance. Once in sixth form they learned they had already made decisions which closed off certain pathways to them.

In 2015, I found **IntoUniversity** and it was a perfect fit. The role combined the passion and knowledge I had from all of my previous experience.'

**Why do you think that Learning Recovery is needed for our students?**

'There are a whole host of factors. Our students are more likely to lack access to computers and devices, live in overcrowded housing conditions, to be socially isolated and to have had less contact with teachers during lockdown. I have friends who are still teaching. Those in independent schools are teaching lessons online every day and even providing extra support. This contrasts to others in state schools who have estimated that up to 70% of students haven't engaged with the learning set. These anecdotes support the research. I was really struck by the Machin/Elliot Major report's [COVID-19 and Social Mobility, 2020] estimate of four to six months of learning loss for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Given we were starting from a point of a widening attainment gap, this will have huge and lasting implications.

It is also a very daunting time both for students and their parents, who have also never experienced a time like this before. Navigating the issues around welfare that come out of this uncertainty will be just as important as helping students to catch up academically. The wider implications of an economic downturn will affect our students and families the most. That's why our focus now has to shift beyond the lockdown and into supporting families with the after-effects of this pandemic.'

**Why is IntoUniversity well-placed to provide this support with Learning Recovery?**

'We're already there in the community, and have over 15 years' experience, providing the support that is needed. Our approach has always been long term and hyper local; we are embedded in local communities and adapt to specific local circumstances which, when you consider the local Leicester lockdown, is all the more important. We will be able to respond in a way which I think other national charities may not. In each community, we also have long-standing relationships with schools, families, universities, and businesses, and can act as a connector bringing together all of these elements to provide the best support for students dealing with current and future challenges. We specialise in providing long-term, pastoral and academic support, and maintaining relationships with our students and families, so will be able to identify gaps in learning and offer tailored support quickly.'

**While specific plans are still being developed, what do you expect will be focused on during the Learning Recovery programme?**

'We will be focusing on how to tailor our programmes and approaches to best serve our young people. In the short term, that means working closely with schools to understand their needs, any changes that are ahead, and what the most important support is that we can provide to them.

We must adapt our support based on student needs, whether they are transitioning to Secondary school, studying for GCSEs or in sixth form, making decisions in this 'new normal'. This time will have affected young people and their families so differently. For the students we work closely with at Academic Support, we will be using our links with experienced volunteers and universities to offer targeted support to make up for lost learning. Some students may need help with socialisation if they have been isolated, so would be offered mentoring. Maintaining up-to-date knowledge of the HE sector is also going to be so important; things can change so rapidly and we need to make sure we give the best advice to our young people.

We'll also continue to use the most effective innovations we have developed and adopted in lockdown. During this adversity, our delivery team have achieved great things and I'm looking forward to shaping our response to get the best results we can for our young people.'

Staying Focused

# Staying Focused: **Into**University's COVID-19 Fundraising Campaign

We are raising crucial funds in order to sustain our network of local learning centres across the country, and reach new communities where young people need our support more than ever. In order to provide the essential support that our young people require and which **Into**University is uniquely placed to offer, we have launched a new fundraising campaign: Staying Focused.

The campaign speaks directly to all elements of the charity. Through raising these funds, we will be able to stay focused on the needs of our young people to protect them from the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. The campaign will also enable our students to stay focused on their education and not be driven off course by the pandemic. Finally, through supporting the campaign our partners can stay focused on helping us to deliver the vital support that our young people need.



Our ambitious campaign aims to raise £3 million by 31st August 2021, which will cover all of the organisation's costs until the end of the 2020/21 academic year.



Thanks to our supporters, we have already raised £750,000 of the £3 million, meaning we are a quarter of the way to our target.



In our campaign video, Centre Leaders and students from across the **Into**University network discuss the work we have been doing during lockdown. The campaign has had a very promising start, having received a warm reaction from our supporters. We have been delighted by the number of contributions which have already been made to Staying Focused, along with the amount of opportunities to apply for funding which have been presented to us.

 Watch the video on our YouTube channel.

'I am delighted with how the Staying Focused campaign has been received by our partners. We have already had a number of significant commitments toward the campaign target of £3 million, and partners continue to present new opportunities to help sustain our vital work with students over the coming years. It is a fantastic start, and we will be working hard in the coming weeks to use the campaign to raise further awareness of the impact of our centres and secure further grants. There is a long way still to go, but we are very grateful for the support our brilliant funding partners continue to provide.'

**John Bleasdale, Head of Development at IntoUniversity**



In order to raise further awareness, secure further funding and reach our aspirational target, we are organising a fundraising event, 100 for 100k, inviting people, either in a team or individually, to take on a challenge related to the number 100 throughout the month of August. This can include:

  
**Cycling**  
100 miles

  
**Baking**  
100 cakes

  
**Reading**  
100 books

The fundraised total will fill the gap of one of our **Into**University Brighton funders who had to withdraw their funding due to financial difficulty surrounding COVID-19, and will also go towards our Staying Focused £3 million total.

**If you are interested in taking part in the fundraiser, please visit the 'Fundraise for IntoUniversity' page of our website.**

**We are extremely grateful for the continued commitment and support of our partners, even as times get tougher for us all.**

 We would love to hear your feedback about *aspire*. To get in touch or to find out more about **Into**University please visit our website [www.intouniversity.org](http://www.intouniversity.org), drop Vicky an email at [aspire@intouniversity.org](mailto:aspire@intouniversity.org) or call us on **020 7243 0242**.

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